

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-5. (canceled)

6. (previously presented) The communication connection merge method as set forth in claim 24, wherein said connection-oriented network is a multi-protocol label switching network, said communication connections are label switched paths, and said node is a label switching router.

7. (previously presented) The communication connection merge method as set forth in claim 24, wherein said connection-oriented network is an asynchronous transfer mode network, said communication connections are virtual channels, and said tunneling communication connection is a virtual path, and said node is an asynchronous transfer mode switch.

8-14. (canceled)

15. (previously presented) A node which consolidates communication connections in a connection-oriented network, comprising:

a processor which determines whether a tunneling communication connection is present both in a first route of an existing communication connection and in a second route of a second communication connection, wherein said first and second routes have different destination nodes in said connection-oriented network;

wherein said processor modifies a parameter of said tunneling communication connection to accommodate merging said second communication connection in said tunneling communication connection; and

wherein said processor merges said existing communication connection and said second communication connection on said tunneling communication connection.

16. (currently amended) The node as set forth in claim 15, wherein said existing communications communication connection is a tunneling communication connection.

17. (previously presented) The node as set forth in claim 15, wherein said connection-oriented network is a multi-protocol label switching network, said communication connections are label switched paths, and said node is a label switching router.

18. (previously presented) The node as set forth in claim 15, wherein said connection-oriented network is an asynchronous transfer mode network, said

communication connection is a virtual channel and said tunneling communication connection is a virtual path, and said node is an asynchronous transfer mode switch.

19. (previously presented) The node of claim 15, wherein said processor creates a tunneling communication connection capable of accommodating said existing communication connection, wherein said tunneling communication connection is in said first route and said second route.

20-22. (canceled)

23. (currently amended) The node of claim 19, wherein said second communications communication connection is a new communication connection.

24. (previously presented) A communication merge method in a connection-oriented network which consolidates an existing communication connection, comprising:
determining whether a tunneling communication connection is present in both a first route to a first destination node with a second communication connection having a second route to a second destination node in said connection-oriented network, wherein said first node and said second node are different nodes;

modifying a parameter of said tunneling communication connection to accommodate a merger of said communication connections, if said tunneling communication connection is present; and

merging said communication connections on said tunneling communication connection.

25. (currently amended) The communication merge method of claim 24, wherein said existing ~~communications~~ communication connection is a tunneling communication connection.

26. (previously presented) The communication merge method of claim 24, wherein said method further comprises:

creating a new tunneling communication connection from a third node to a fourth node, wherein said third and fourth nodes are in said first route and second route, if said tunneling communication connection is not present.

27. (previously presented) The communication merge method of claim 26, wherein said second communication connection is a new communication connection.

28. (previously presented) The communication merge method of claim 24, wherein said method further comprises:

stacking a label assigned for the tunneling communication connection in a shim header.

29. (new) The communication merge method of claim 24, further comprising:

determining, at a node within the tunneling communication connection, if modification of the parameter is possible; and

temporarily setting the modification of the parameter when modification of the parameter at the node is possible.

30. (new) The communication merge method of claim 29, further comprising:
sending, by the node, a parameter modification request to another node within the tunneling communication connection; and
receiving, by the node, a parameter modification response from the other node, the parameter modification response indicating whether modification of the parameter at the other node is possible.

31. (new) The communication merge method of claim 30, wherein modifying a parameter of said tunneling communication connection includes:
modifying the parameter when the parameter modification response from the other node indicates that modification of the parameter at the other node is possible.

32. (new) The node of claim 15, wherein the processor is configured to:
determine if modification of the parameter is possible, and
temporarily set the modification of the parameter when modification of the parameter is possible.

33. (new) The node of claim 32, wherein the processor is further configured to:

send a parameter modification request to another node within the tunneling communication connection, and

receive a parameter modification response from the other node, the parameter modification response indicating whether modification of the parameter at the other node is possible.

34. (new) The node of claim 33, wherein when modifying a parameter of said tunneling communication connection, the processor is configured to modify the parameter when the parameter modification response from the other node indicates that modification of the parameter at the other node is possible.

35. (new) A node that consolidates communication connections in a connection-oriented network that includes a plurality of nodes, comprising:

a processor to:

determine whether a tunneling communication connection is present both in a first route of an existing communication connection and in a second route of a second communication connection, the first and second routes being associated with different destination nodes in the connection-oriented network,

determine if modification of a parameter of the tunneling communication connection to accommodate merging the second communication connection in the

tunneling communication connection is possible based on a message from at least one other node, and

when modification of the parameter is determined to be possible, modify the parameter and merge the existing communication connection and the second communication connection on the tunneling communication connection.

36. (new) The node of claim 35, wherein the processor is further configured to:

send a parameter modification request to the at least one other node, and receive the message from the at least one other node, the message indicating whether modification of the parameter at the at least one other node is possible.

37. (new) The node of claim 36, wherein when modifying the parameter, the processor is configured to modify the parameter when the message from the at least one other node indicates that modification of the parameter at the at least one other node is possible.